

A HEALTHIER NATION

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A Healthier Nation

BECAUSE OF THE WAR, THE HEALTH OF THE nation has improved. This statement is not really so strange as it may appear at first sight.

The State has seen to it that everyone able to work has had work—and therefore wages. It has organised the distribution of cheap fruit juices, cod liver oil and milk for children and expectant mothers. It has expanded the number of nurseries. It has organised a fair share of available supplies of food by rationing, and price control. It has convinced many more mothers of the value of protecting their children against diphtheria, and has provided the treatment free of charge.

These measures are additional to those which already existed in peace-time, such as maternity and child welfare schemes, school medical services and the provision of school meals, all of which were organised by the State and the local authorities.

In consequence, our children are healthier, fewer babies under one month old are dying, and there are fewer deaths from diphtheria.

At the same time, there is an increasing prevalence of what is known as minor illness, such as the cold, influenza, rheumatism, nervous troubles, stomach disorders and so on.

This is partly due to the fact that we are getting tired, after five years of tension and war. But that is only half the explanation.

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Where the State has provided conditions and facilities for the improvement of health, beneficial results are at once apparent ; but where, as in the case of medical, dental or hospital services, the best attention is available only to those with most money to spend, the position is deteriorating.

Working people, rather than wait for hours in a crowded surgery or hospital waiting room for a few moments with a doctor, or unable, because of the cost, to get a doctor for the children, or fearing to "go on the panel" because it means so great a drop in income, often delay taking expert advice until it is too late. In any case, the average General Practitioner is overworked and poorly equipped and consequently unable to use his skill to the best advantage.

On the other hand, if the patient has money, the doctor will call at any time of the day or night, and specialist opinion, a private ward, a nursing and convalescent home are immediately available.

The existence of these two standards of health service, one for the rich and the other for the rest, produces obvious results.

What is required is a National Health Service, free to all, staffed by doctors, dental surgeons, nurses and other health workers on a full-time basis.

Health Centres, at which family doctors and specialists would be available, must be established in every locality. Under one roof, the doctors, working as a team, would be provided with the most modern and complete equipment for

carrying out every kind of medical test and performing minor operations, massage or electric treatment.

Treatment at the Health Centres should be available to everyone without cost. If necessary, patients should be visited at their homes, also without cost. Full nursing facilities must be provided, both at the Centre, and also at the home.

An Industrial Health Service, as part of the National Health Service, is also required, so that every worker's health is also looked after at his place of employment.

Hospitals should come into the National Health Service, and cease to depend for their existence and standard of treatment on appeals to charity.

To complete the picture, we need a higher standard of living, security in sickness, old age or incapacity, good homes, healthier working conditions, time for relaxation and leisure activities, and planned rebuilding and redevelopment to provide green spaces, sports grounds and recreational facilities.

Recommended reading :

A NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE, 6d.

If you wish to know more about other questions of Communist Policy, advice on reading material, or details of membership, write to :

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